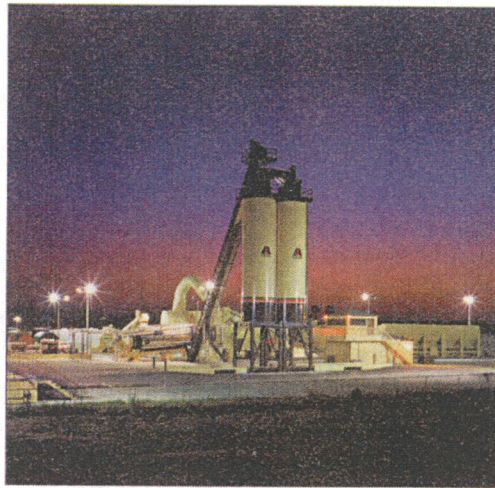


Black enhances green

Asphalt association continues to lead environmental crusade

By Mike Acott

The National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA) and the hot-mix asphalt (HMA) industry have a track record on environmental stewardship that cannot even be approached by any other industry that I know of. Our everyday efforts conserve precious natural



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resources, minimize the impact of our operations on the environment and reduce reliance on landfills.

The continuous process of reducing the industry's impact on the environment has led to some astonishing results. For example, in 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared in two separate actions that HMA production facilities do not have the potential to be major sources of hazardous air pollutants and, further, that all HMA facilities together are trivial sources of specific pollutants. These "delisting" actions confirmed what we have always believed and what the science shows—emissions from HMA plants are very low and well-controlled.

Experts say the air quality effects of HMA production have been evaluated more thoroughly than those of any other industry in the country. NAPA, our members and the EPA have funded studies and worked in partnership for many years to quantify emissions and add to the knowledge base about HMA plants.

The investments have been substantial. Over a four-year period in the early 1990s, NAPA itself invested more than \$300,000 in the test-

ing of seven asphalt plants. Additional financial support for the research also came from HMA producer members whose plants were tested and from equipment manufacturers and other companies in the industry. The EPA-sponsored testing was estimated to have cost \$1.5 million at several HMA facilities around the country.

The delisting of asphalt plants was not the first time NAPA and the HMA industry have been recognized in a positive way by our partners at federal regulatory agencies. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) bestowed the first NORA Award on the partnership that put engineering controls on highway-class pavers. NIOSH recently affirmed that partnership with a grant for the ongoing "phase two" study of the use and effectiveness of the systems.

Not only does NAPA work effectively with partners to improve our environmental performance, we have a major program within the industry to encourage and recognize continuous improvement in this arena. The Diamond Achievement Commendation for Excellence in Hot Mix Asphalt Plant/Site Operations has more than 365 current participants and is changing the way America thinks about our operations.

Taking a positive approach to potential challenges, NAPA sponsors research at the National Center for Asphalt Technology on ways to reduce emissions and odors where they may occur. We are gaining new knowledge about asphalt binders and devising new tools for contractors.

Not only do asphalt pavements provide long-life solutions for highway construction, they also are 100% recyclable. In fact, asphalt pavement is the No. 1 recycled material in the U.S. Some types of asphalt pavement reduce noise pollution and other environmental concerns. And, while annual production of HMA paving material has increased by more than 250% over the past 40 years, total emissions from HMA plants have dropped by 97% or more in that same period.

We have clearly made the case for asphalt as a sustainable material. This is a legacy in which we can take pride. ■

Acott is president of NAPA, Lanham, Md.

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